

Jan 31. 8135-6-19
Green W. Greeting
A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH, in *CHESTER*,

ON SUNDAY THE 9TH,

AT

St. PETER's, in *CHESTER*,

ON SUNDAY THE 16TH OF DECEMBER 1792,

AT

St. MARY's, in *MANCHESTER*,

ON SUNDAY THE 6TH OF JANUARY, 1793,

AND AT THE

COLLEGIATE CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY THE 13TH.

By THOMAS BANCROFT, M.A.
HEAD MASTER OF THE KING'S SCHOOL, CHESTER.

HARROP, PRINTER,
M,DCC,XCIII,

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CATHEDRAL CHURCH, WESTER

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THE

BY THOMAS BANCROFT

Head Master of the Kentucky

of the

STARRO, PRINTER,
MOSCOW, KY.

1 St. Peter ii. 17.

Love the Brotherhood; fear God; honour the King.

THERE never was a system of precepts delivered to the world, and recommended to the practice of men, so full of Benevolence and so adapted to produce Unity and Concord, as the Gospel. Exclusive of the divine character, with which it is stamped in heaven, and the miraculous powers, which were employed to establish it; the purity of its moral doctrines and the spirit of universal Charity, which breathes in every line, are an evidence of its superior excellence, that has often brought conviction to the heart of unbelievers. The Apostate *Julian* exhorted his Pagan subjects to imitate the manners of the Christians. Heathen Emperors bore honourable testimony to the fidelity of their Christian Soldiers; for, though those Emperors were indeed Tyrants, and Enemies to the kingdom of Christ, the Christians in their service kept steadily in view the gospel-admonition, so earnestly and so frequently urged, of *Obedience to Superiors*. In times of pestilence and famine, there are instances recorded of heroical Benevolence, not of an individual, but of all, who named the name of Christ. When every principle, which might have actuated the Heathen to lend his assistance, was seen to fail; when he fled from the contagious touch of his Heathen brethren and deserted his duty for the sake of personal safety; the spirit of the Gospel shrunk not from certain danger, but animated its followers to succour both

Heath.

Heathens and Christians, though death was likely to be the reward of their humanity.

Such have been, and such would always be, the happy effects of the Christian Religion, if the *good seed* of the word was not choaked by the *tares* of selfish views and unregenerate passions. It was then that the blessings of the kingdom of Christ were experienced among men, which the Prophet Isaiah so beautifully and emphatically describes; "*The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, and the Calf and the young Lion and the Fattling together;—and a little Child shall lead them.*"

God is Love, and the Religion, which we profess, is the practice of that amiable virtue, by which God himself condescends to be characterised. Its divine Author wished it to be the distinguishing mark of his Disciples; "*By this shall all men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love one to another,*" and in his farewell prayers and discourses he considered the peaceful fruits of a Christian Spirit, as the most precious bequest he could leave to the World.

At this happy season of the year we are called upon, my Christian Brethren, to commemorate the coming of our Lord to redeem and sanctify, to reconcile man to man, and Sinners to their God. He bowed the heavens and came down to unite in the bands of Humanity, the sacred graces of *Mercy and Truth*, of *Righteousness and Peace*: and in a manner corresponding with the

the dignity and kindness of his commission, the arrival of the *Prince of Peace* was ushered in by a choir of Angels, singing, "*Glory be to God on high, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards men.*"—Gracious Heaven! what perverseness there must be in man, when he refuses to join in this blessed chorus. Yet many of us, I fear, are not well qualified to celebrate the advent of the Lord our Righteousness, have but few offerings of Charity and Benevolence, and but little of the incense of Good Works and Good Wishes to present to our infant Saviour.

At the period of his real coming in the flesh, there was Peace throughout the world: *Their Swords were beaten into plough shares, and their Spears into pruning hooks.*" This Concord among Gentile nations was undoubtedly designed by an over-ruling Providence as the fittest homage, that could be paid to the heavenly messenger of Peace. But at the present celebration of that happy event, what a frightful contrast is to be found in the state of *Christian Nations!* Rapine and War are spreading devastation in many; and even in our own, the clamours of discontent and disobedience have been heard, where so lately the voice of joy and thanksgiving resounded, and the blaze of heartfelt Loyalty illuminated our streets. Yet if the causes continue unimpaired, which then inspired that affection, why should that affection be lessened? If the blessings of Law and Order are to be prized; if to eat the fruit of one's own labour, if to sit under one's own figtree, if, to live secure from the Plunderer and
Assassin,

Assassin, is to be a happy People, we are still a happy People, and may remain such, if we do not wantonly throw away the blessings in our possession. Our Sovereign has not ceased to govern his people with equity, moderation and tenderness; his Ministers are not less active and vigilant over their welfare; the Legislature has not been less attentive to all their reasonable claims; Respect waits upon us abroad, and Prosperity and Opulence at home—Then why are these symptoms of alarm, and forebodings of danger; why do *the merry-hearted sigh* amidst circumstances, that denote National Felicity? You have read that Earthquakes, which have made the proud city a heap of ruins, have burst forth beneath the feet of the trembling inhabitants, at a time, when the face of nature has appeared ~~the~~ most gay and smiling—The storm, we have reason to apprehend, had long been collecting its force; the public ear had been wretchedly abused by dishonest tales of Reform; and at last a visionary project of civil *Equality* was to be brought forward to gratify the envious, the desperate, and the needy. “*The treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously;*” Natives have made themselves Aliens to the love of their Country, and no longer cherish the reverence, that is due to the *Ark* of the Constitution, but would bear with unhallowed hands the sacred treasure, as an offering to the many-headed Idol of a French Republic. Our Religion likewise, the best and dearest pledge of the present and future welfare of Mankind, was to have been a part of the sacrifice. For while they disparaged our Government, they were
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assiduous in decrying the authority and doctrines of the Gospel; because the Gospel had already condemned their principles and conduct. The Gospel exhorts men to live peaceably with each other, and to reverence all who are in authority, not merely from a fear of Men but of God; for however thoughtless they may be of the consequences of resisting the ordinance of Men, they are abandoned indeed, who are fearless of the consequences of God's everlasting displeasure—Yet there are—(how shall I name them? I cannot call them *Teachers of Religion*, though they wear the garb and affect the name) who confederate with Atheists to drive out Christianity from among us; there are Englishmen, who once felt an honest pride in being called so, that have leagued with the open enemies of our Zion, have marked her bulwarks for destruction, and are ready to cry out with those children of Edom, "*Down with them, down with them even to the Ground.*"

In all Societies, however equitably governed, we are presented with this melancholy truth, that some men are always to be found, who turn with disgust from the general concord of affection and duty. Haughtiness of soul is apt to meet with disappointment, and disappointment to beget disaffection. The progress is but too easy and too common.

But let the wisest of Political Projectors contrive a form of Government, if they can, which will prevent or satisfy the claims of all such. There are others
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of tempers so unfortunate, as to be then most discontented, when laid upon the lap of ease and security. They are like *the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* Alarms and tumults, bloodshed and rapine are sights and sounds, which suit the gloomy temper of their souls. These men have all been eager to engage you in the admiration of French Revolutions, and were doubtless too well prepared to act what they so much admire; I will not say all they cruelties, which have been perpetrated in France; but so far the slightest knowledge of human nature will authorize me to say that the human heart imposes upon itself, and rarely knows the extent of its own iniquity. It is the sunshine of opportunity, which calls forth the poisonous Reptile, and the Traveller is then most in danger, who pursues perplexed and thorny paths. Hazael, the king of Syria, when he was told by the Man of God of the cruelties, the devastations, and the murders, which he would afterwards commit, exclaimed with some surprize, "*What is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?*" He thought himself hardly capable of so great wickedness, because a fit occasion had not yet given scope to his imperious passions.

To shew you, that these are not groundless insinuations, let us recur for a moment to those transactions and changes in France, which they are importunate in recommending to our imitation.—That Nation cast out the evil spirit of Despotism; but it has returned, and finding the mansion of the State swept and

and garnished, has taken seven other spirits more wicked than himself to dwell there.—They framed a Constitution, and the pens of our Reformers were drawn to defend it, as a monument of human wisdom; yet this monument of their own wisdom was suddenly overthrown.—They demolished a State Prison; yet raised another more dreary and formidable for the unhappy Man and his Family, whose greatest offence seems to have been, that he was born to a Throne.—They threw down the Altars of their God, and slew his Prophets with the sword. Their National Assembly was forcibly deposed. The domination of Equality began—I tremble at the sequel; for that no one like themselves might remain, their prisons were instantly crowded with victims, whom suspicion, malice and envy were pleased to proscribe. The ruffian hands of violence were let loose. Beauty, and innocence, and old age were dragged forth, stabbed, trampled upon.—But spare me the recital of deeds of horror, which posterity will blush to see recorded in the annals of the Human Race.—Yet these lawless Inquisitors, so deeply drenched in blood, still live. Though their National Representation be renewed, they live unpunished, are turbulently loud in their public Councils, and threaten to act over again their outrageous cruelties. In the mean time, while Iniquity of so black a dye walks abroad and boasts of its crimes, their National Convention pursues with unrelenting severity the fearful Emigrant, who is guilty of no other fault, than that he sought for an asylum in a foreign land at an hour of universal dismay and danger,

danger, when they themselves confess, that the Magistracy was unable to protect the lives of unoffending citizens.

These are some of the unexaggerated transactions of the scene, to which Reformers are solicitous to direct your attention; and the actors in it you are invited to receive with the kifs of friendship and brotherhood. But you do not, I conceive, consider them as examples of Justice, or Wisdom, or Humanity; you see nothing, which does not excite your sorrow for the oppressed, and detestation of the oppressors. Who then can there be, that wishes to see England made the theatre of such barbarous impieties? Have you therefore ever considered, ye Advocates of Revolutions, thro' what a field of blood you would lead us to you know not what? Have you utterly extinguished the warm emotions of Christian and Brotherly love in your bosoms; have you resolved to burst the cords of humanity, which bind the heart of man to his fellow-creature, when that fellow-creature too is your countryman, perhaps a neighbour or relation? Is it *Patriotism*, to labour in persuading the People, that they are unhappy, when they thought otherwise; to sour their meals, which were heretofore chearful, with discontent; to perplex their minds with political altercations; and at the same time, to hide from them every comfortable truth, that would make their faithful service a perfect freedom? Is it *Honesty* to pursue crooked ways and employ dishonest stratagems to steal upon the credulity of the unthinking

ing and uninformed? The purpose you have in view cannot be good, which is prosecuted at the expence of truth, of peace, of every principle, which Reason, and Humanity had originally impressed upon your hearts.

But I forbear to expostulate with men, who are rarely (if ever) seen to mix in Christian Congregations. How strong warning ought this to be, my Christian friends, against a too easy belief in the integrity of their motives and the sincerity of their professions? For he who is a rebel to God, will upon every slight temptation throw off his allegiance to his King, and all obligations of duty to his Neighbour.

To you, therefore, I beg leave to address myself, whose hearts have not yet been seduced by the contagion of seditious doctrines and examples. You have lately been accosted by these designing men, for they have been indefatigable in their endeavours to make Profelytes.—They have told you, that they are anxious to promote the welfare of their Countrymen by Reforms of great Abuses in Government, and they wish to assist them in doing it.—But, before you engage yourselves in their service, it is surely necessary for you to expect from men, who thus step forward as public Reformers; that they themselves should stand clear from all suspicion, that they are instigated to it by Self-interest, Disappointment, or other dishonourable motives. It is also necessary, that you should know the extent of their designs. But
this

this is no longer kept secret, Though they talked of Reform only in the outset, they have told you, that the building of our Constitution is not fit to stand in this age of Revolutions, that they shall not be content with lopping off a few branches, but are resolved to cut down root and branch, as being an incumbrance upon the ground. Lastly, it will be necessary for you, if you have hearkened to them so far, to be assured of their capacity to frame a plan of consummate wisdom for the government of a great Nation, and of their upright resolution to conduct it with impartial consistency. Their own assertions can pass for nothing. Bold pretensions are often the mere symptoms of intemperate passions or a weak judgement: and they, whose uncontrollable spirits now refuse to respect the Rights of Governors, would, if they were raised to power, pay as little respect to the Rights of the Governed. Besides, if the ablest Reasoners on the side of Reformation have shifted their ground so often, if they were at first lavish in their praises of our own Revolution in the time of William, if they afterwards transferred those praises to a yet greater limitation of Regal Power lately effected in France, if they then took upon them to defend the demolition of Monarchy, the confusion of Republicanism, and the acts of Impiety and Murder, with which its civil Equality commenced, what is it which their Converts have to trust to and receive? It is therefore better, as it is safer, to trust to a Government, such as is the present, recommended by the experience of more than a hundred years, than to self-opinionated Schemes of French Free-

Free-thinkers, which violence and caprice are every day about to disturb or overthrow.

They press upon you the duty of being *liberal*, of divesting yourselves of all prejudice and bigotry. But be not deceived by words. The prejudice and bigotry, which they wish to do away, is an attachment to every thing, which is established in Religion and Politics: And, believe me, it is to be more than *liberal*, to squander foolishly your patrimony, to call evil good, and good evil, to squander away every honest principle and every laudable emotion to be moulded by these new Teachers, and to make your minds like glass mirrors that will obsequiously reflect, whatever they may please to present before them.

You have been solicited to make an exchange of the Constitution, by which your Country has been made great and prosperous, for another, which a mad Philosophy projected, but was not able to build. You are therefore bidden to change a *Real Good in possession*, for a mere uncertain prospect; and upon these sorry conditions to hazard your liberties and lives, to forfeit your innocence, your security, your everlasting peace; to imbrue your hands in the blood of your Countrymen and Neighbours; and perhaps, after all, to leave wretchedness and discord as the only inheritance of your Children. With whom likewise are you solicited to associate for the accomplishment of the work? With faithless strangers, the avowed enemies of your Country, with the Outcasts of Society; with those

those, whom the Justice of the Law has confined from committing outrages upon it; with the common Robber and the Incendiary.

It might seem unnecessary, and even indecent to urge such dissuatives to a Christian Audience; if it had not been, that a phrensy has gone forth, which threatened to destroy every sober principle of Duty and Fellow-feeling. But you, I trust, will be more inclined to read your Bibles, than the works of profligate and unprincipled men, and will rather pray for, than disturb the peace of our Jerusalem. In your Bibles you will learn more wholesome lessons, and be better instructed to fulfil the duties of your several stations. You will forbear to use *your Liberty as a cloke of Maliciousness*: You will not embitter your little portion of existence upon earth with idle discontents and seditious wranglings, but prepare yourselves for a more important change, when the peaceful Disciple of the blessed Jesus will be exalted to a happiness and glory, which the proud Disputer of this World, the Agent of Discord will never know.

I need not therefore appeal to your judgements, whether you will hearken unto God, or to Man; to your God and Saviour, who “*bringeth good tidings and publisheth Peace and Salvation,*” or to “*presumptuous, self-willed men, who despise all Dominion, speak evil of Dignities, and deny the only Lord God, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*”

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It is with pleasure I observe, that the People have again spoken loudly and decidedly the language of Reason, Loyalty, and Religion. May these honest impressions of Duty be never less distinct and clear in the bosoms of Englishmen, may they never sink under the luke-warm indifference of Philosophy, or be lost in the turbulence of a wild Enthusiasm. Sensible (as I confidently hope) we all are of the value of those things, *which belong to our peace*, and of the hazard we run from civil dissention, that they may *be for ever bid from our eyes*, let us fervently address the throne of Mercy in the truly Christian prayer, which our Church has taught us—

“ O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace, give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy Divisions: take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly Union and Concord; that, as there is but one body and one spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* ”

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Location, I. V. and Religion. May their honest
inspiration of duty be never less abundant and their in-
the bottom of the foundation, may they never cease to un-
der the same warm influence of philosophy or be
lost in the turbidness of a world of selfishness. Scarcely
as I fondly hope, as of all the friends of this
cause, may I be numbered as one of the number who
run from civil-dissension, that they may be
but few ever say, let us fervently submit the cause
of Mercy in the early Christian period, which our
Church has taught us

ADDRESS

"O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our
only Saviour, the Prince of Peace, who art the
only to lay to heart, and we are in by
our unhappy Distresses, and we are in by
justice, and whatsoever, and we are in by
Union and Concord, that we may be in by
and one spirit and one hope, and we are in by
Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Lord, and we are in by
us all, so we may be in by one Lord, and we are in by
of one Lord, united in one holy bond of Truth and
Peace, of Truth and Christ, and may we in one mind
and one mouth glorify thee through Jesus Christ our
Lord, Amen."

